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Press Release

San Francisco Bay Area Voters Approve New Funding For Major Ferry Expansion

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) – The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA) announced passage of Regional Measure 2 (RM2), a \$3 billion transportation-spending plan that provides a substantial investment in construction of eight new Bay Area ferryboats. This plan will be funded out of a \$1 toll increase on all Bay Area bridges with the exception of the Golden Gate Bridge. The measure also includes funding for other BART, rail and bus projects.

RM 2 funding will allow for new service between San Francisco and the cities of South San Francisco and Berkeley. It will buy more boats for the already successful service between San Francisco and Oakland/Alameda and will increase frequency of service for the Vallejo route. Also, the measure carries money for the next expansion of the San Francisco Downtown Ferry Terminal to accommodate the growth in ferry service and enhance emergency response capabilities.

"We are delighted that ferries are part of the biggest transportation investment that this region has made in over a decade! We look forward to serving Bay Area communities by delivering new ferry boats and new terminals," said Charlene Johnson, President, WTA Board of Directors.

In August 2003, the State of California approved the WTA's plan to operate a comprehensive regional ferry system on the Bay. The plan calls for the addition of 31 new boats, seven new routes, convenient land-side connections and eight new terminals. The new fleet of ferry vessels will use advanced emissions controls that will result in air emissions 85% cleaner than EPA's 2007 standard for diesel marine engines.

"Regional Measure 2 provides the money to jumpstart this long-awaited ferry expansion," said Steve Castleberry, the WTA's Chief Executive Officer. "The Bay Area currently has the third-largest commuter ferry system in the country. By investing in our ferry system, we can get more people out of their cars and onto ferries," added Castleberry. The WTA's studies project that by 2025, ridership will triple to 12 million passengers per year with the expanded service.

The WTA is working with San Mateo and Contra Costa counties to secure funds for terminals, more operating dollars and other routes from sales tax renewals expected to happen November 2004. On a national level, it is working with other ferry systems to increase the Federal Ferry Boat Discretionary fund. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and California Senators Feinstein and Boxer recently led an amendment approved by the U.S. Senate to increase the Federal Ferry Boat Discretionary Program from \$38 million to \$125 million per year in the Transportation Reauthorization bill.

This year, the WTA will begin doing site-specific design, planning and environmental studies that are funded by RM2. It will also begin design work on new boats, which are slated for delivery as early as 2007.

The WTA's ten-year plan recommends new ferry routes to Berkeley, Richmond, Treasure Island, Antioch-Martinez, Hercules, South San Francisco and Redwood City, and expansion of existing routes serving Vallejo, Sausalito, Larkspur, Oakland, Alameda and Harbor Bay Island. The WTA will also study future routes to Port Sonoma, San Francisco's Hunters Point, and Moffett Field. #